

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ELLA BEAN LIVINGSTON



ELLA BEAN LIVINGSTON

1882 - 1975

by Eleanor J. Elwert

The Rutland Historical Society is the fortunate owner of an extensive, very fine collection of North Dakota and Southwest Indian artifacts, quite an unusual possession for a small Vermont museum. The Ella Bean Livingston collection of Indian Crafts was given to the Society in the fall of 1972 at the time Mrs. Livingston was to move from her apartment in Templewood Court to a Rutland nursing home.

Since coming to Rutland in 1930 she had shared her treasures — everything from a handsome Sioux feather headdress to Navajo turquoise and silver jewelry — with the people in the area. A generous, public-spirited individual, Mrs. Livingston wanted to keep the collection intact to be available to the community down through the years.

Ella Augusta Bean was born in Littleton, New Hampshire, October 19, 1882, daughter of Leslie F. and Minnie (Henderson) Bean. She had an older sister, Stella May, and a younger brother, Percy James. At age 20 she married Samuel Smith, but less than a year later he died of tuberculosis.

Ella was an expert needlewoman, and during this period she was the proprietor of a small needlework and gift shop. Later, the young widow took nurse's training at Brightlook Hospital, St. Johnsbury, earning a certificate in October, 1907.

We can only surmise that her reason for taking a position as a nurse in the U.S. Indian Service at Fort Yates, North Dakota, in 1916 was due to a sense of adventure. After two years at Fort Yates, she spent nine months at Fort Defiance, Arizona, also in the Indian Service. In September, 1918, she received an appointment to the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and served at Fort Bayard, New Mexico, hospital. Judging by a photo album of this period the nurses and other staff had glorious good times picnicking and indulging in much good-natured horseplay.

It was while she was stationed at Fort Bayard that she, with several other nurses and one man, took a two week trip on horseback through the newly designated Gila National Forest. We can share the experience even now because it is possible to read her diary while thumbing through the photo album she made of the trip, matching the text to the pictures.

During the years she spent out West Mrs. Livingston became an avid student and collector of Indian artifacts. She kept meticulous records and eventually made a catalog of her collection. One can imagine the problems she must have had, as she moved about, packing and unpacking such items as fragile clay pots and heavy wool rugs.

From evidence in several photo albums, we know she spent many weekends traveling to nearby Indian festivals, as would any tourist. Her interest went beyond mere curiosity, however. She acquired a small collection of books on Indian life which helped her to understand and explain to others, in vivid detail, the different Indian cultures. Eventually, she composed talks about the Sioux, Pueblo and Navajo tribes that she gave to school children and adult groups in Rutland.

A born collector, Mrs. Livingston filled five albums with photos from her days out West. During her years in Rutland, she pasted into a scrapbook essays from a favorite columnist in the Rutland Herald. Another love was poetry, which was carefully copied into notebooks. It was her careful record keeping that makes her such a rewarding subject for research. It doesn't happen too often, but, when it does, it makes the life of a researcher or museum curator a great pleasure. What has been particularly helpful are the five diaries she kept out West. The last one begins on June 24, 1921. "Midsummer day — Left Phoenix at 7 a.m. on my start East. Like all Arizona days it was beautiful altho very hot — I hated to leave Phoenix for I had met so many congenial people . . .". However, for information about her life in Rutland, we have had to rely on the memories of her relatives and friends.

On October 22, 1921, Mrs. Ella Bean Smith married Bert Livingston in Watertown, New York. Ella and Bert had been acquainted with each other during the period she lived in St. Johnsbury after her first husband's death. Bert's first wife had died only a few years after their only child, Gladys, was born. Gladys was brought up by her father's parents in St. Johnsbury, though she spent her summers in Rutland. Gladys and her husband, Elwyn H. Stevens, had two sons, Elwyn H., Jr., now deceased, and Charles. Mrs. Stevens, Sr. has ten grandchildren. Another close living relative, a niece, is Joyce Haggarty (Mrs. Francis S.) of Panton, Vermont.

We know of one event that must have given Ella great pleasure. According to a Watertown News story of June 10, 1926, her father, Leslie Bean, 71 years of age, visited her on his way to Connecticut. He was planning to settle down after having spent 35 years traveling and working in Florida, Nicaragua, Oregon and elsewhere. He was a descendant of one of the three original New Hampshire land grantees and had been quite active in town affairs in Littleton.

Around 1930 Ella and Bert Livingston moved to Rutland, where he was employed at Howe Scale Co. Later, he was persuaded by the retiring custodian at Park St. School to replace him there. He was very active in the Masons, and Ella was a member of the Eastern Star. Bert died March 28, 1958.

Although Ella and Bert did not have children, she was the typical grandmother, always ready to help with her step-grandchildren. She was also active in Parent Teacher Associations, but her major volunteer activity was Red Cross work, particularly telephoning, which she continued well into her eighties. She was a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, often helping out with donations for food or rummage sales.

Her step-daughter, Mrs. Stevens, remembers that a high school history class visited her in her small Templewood apartment, one of the few occasions any group was able to see her entire collection. The Historical Society has since exhibited it on three occasions.



A sight to behold themselves, these sightseers, Ella's nurse friends, at the City of Rocks, a tourist attraction near Fort Bayard and Silver City, New Mexico 1920.



Navajo woman wearing the
typical costume of velvet
blouse and voluminous skirt.
1918

"It was a large snake,
over 4 ft. long all agreed
... a diamond back, and I
said I would like the skin
but Rogers said he would
not skin a snake or touch
one for anything ... Riley
said she would help me,
so we skinned it, after
chopping its head off."

From the "Diary of a
Trip to Gila National
Forest", New Mexico,
September 1-12, 1919. Ella
B. Smith on right.





Another snake — Ella on left. Picture taken at U.S. Army Hospital at Fort Bayard, New Mexico. 1919

Again, through the photo albums, we know that she kept in touch with the nurse friends who had shared so many adventures. Visits to Florida for reunions and an exchange of newsy letters helped to maintain these special bonds of friendship. Mrs. Livingston died at the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington, January 24, 1975, at 92 years of age.

It was the intention of the editor to document and record more information on Mrs. Livingston while relatives and friends were still available. She was perhaps no different from the average woman of her time in many aspects, a good, helping family member and responsible community citizen. Only because of the opportunity she had to live in daily contact with Indians of several different cultures, by developing her interest and appreciation of them and the discernment evident in her collection of fine crafts is she clearly above the average. Rutlanders are the richer for her efforts.

Excerpts from Ella Bean Livingston's Diaries

Jan. 11, 1918 Left Bismark, North Dakota in a blizzard, 30 below with a sharp wind. The train has run very slowly all night. The car was pretty well filled. A Mr. Johnson of Washburn had the upper berth. In the east they rarely put a man in the upper when a lady is alone but here it makes no difference.

Jan. 12, 1918 Have finished my sweater today. On the way to Minneapolis there were three others knitting for Red Cross, so we had quite a social time knitting.

On same trip she had a room in Kansas City with bath for \$2.00 and a turkey dinner for 75c. She was reading "Over the Top", Gerhard's "My Four Years in Germany", and "The Little Lady of the Big House".

Jan. 16, Gallup, New Mexico. The stage (to Ft. Defiance) was a rickety old buckboard with no back to the seat, not the most comfortable thing to ride in. The last part of the way we had to face a strong wind, but I did not feel very cold but am tired in doing 38 miles with no support for the back.

Sept. 3, 1919 The precipices on both sides of the river were very high and of a lovely shade of red sandstone. We stopped a few minutes at the Gila Hot Springs to sample the water, but none of us liked it. We explored the bath houses, but the old resort hotel had burned years ago. Now not even a road to it could be seen.

April 15, 1920 — at Sanitarium in Laguna — Mrs. Cruz changed her dark blue print dress for one of her Pueblo dresses, a beautiful thing. I think the Pueblo costume is so very picturesque. She also had on the white buckskin leggings, and her shawl was rose silk. It was a stunning combination.



The good old days, when women obviously had already “come a long way.” 1921

Excerpts from Talks Mrs. Livingston Gave on Indian Culture

The Sioux are so dignified as to appear almost haughty but when one knows them one finds them very kindly, happy people. They are very fond of their families and both men and women spend much time training their children. One never sees quarreling among the children, altho they tease each other unmercifully. The Sioux have a keen sense of humor and are very fond of practical jokes. The first thing a Sioux gentleman does in the morning after his breakfast is to comb his wife's hair and paint her face. Then she does the same for him.

The Pueblo religion is a strange mixture of Catholicism and Paganism. Each Pueblo has its Patron Saint and these very sociable Indians have parties on the various saints days. For instance on St. John's Day they all gather in the Plaza and go and call on someone named John. They are expected and find the family on their roof where John makes a little speech, then his family begins throwing refreshments into the crowd. They throw loaves of bread, ears of corn, chunks of meat and candy to whoever can catch it. Often to wind up they throw a pail of water on the crowd which is considered a great joke. The crowd then proceeds to another John's and so on.

To me the Navajos are the most interesting of the Indians because they are several generations behind the other tribes in civilization. They wear their hair in the chonga knot. They seldom have combs, just draw their hair straight back and twist. They don't fix their hair every day but only when it gets loose so they have to, which is quite often due to the scratching they do. If a Navajo is not busy at anything else he is busy scratching for they always have both head and body lice. They never bathe not even their hands. They wear many ornaments of silver, rings, bracelets, necklaces, buttons and large discs of silver which the men decorate their belts with.

What I have said about Indians is as I found them between 1916 and 1921 but as the old ones die off and younger ones become educated they have no doubt adopted more of white men's way of living.



Mrs. Livingston in her Templewood Court apartment, October, 1972, holding kachina doll dressed as a Navajo with olla (bowl) on her head.

And on other Matters . . .

The annual exhibit at the Rutland Museum this summer has been "The Rutland Railroad, The Way It Was". The essay below, *Artifacts, Photos, Models Show Glory Days Of Rutland Railroad*, originally appeared on Page 8, Section Five of the September 13, 1981 issue of The Sunday Rutland Herald and The Sunday Times Argus and appears courtesy of the Sunday Rutland Herald and The Sunday Times Argus. The exhibit was prepared by the Museum committee, Eleanor Elwert, chairman, assisted particularly by James S. Davidson, Frances E. Frederick, Leon A. Frederick. Rutland Historical Society photographs accompanying the essay are by Michael L. Austin.

The Rutland County Agricultural Society held its 136th Vermont State Fair in Rutland September 5-13. The Rutland Historical Society maintains a Farm and Rural Life Museum at the Fair. The many donations of machinery, tools and other equipment now fill two former cattle barns. Significant improvements in this Museum were made in the weeks prior to the Fair under the supervision of Farm and Rural Life Museum chairman Arch J. Todd and Museum committee Chairman Elwert, assisted by many members of the Society. The article on page 54 originally appeared on page seven of the September 6, 1981 issue of the Sunday Rutland Herald and The Sunday Times Argus. Rutland Historical Society photographs accompanying the article are by Michael L. Austin.

Artifacts, Photos, Models Show Glory Days Of Rutland Railroad

By ALLEN GILBERT

In the not-so-distant past, you could board a passenger train in Rutland at 2:25 p.m. and be in Grand Central Station in New York City at 8:10 p.m. The one-way coach fare was \$5.25. Or you could wait two minutes and board another passenger train and be in Boston's North Station at 7:10 p.m. The fare was \$3.70.

Those train schedules were in effect as late as 1942, when the nation's war effort was under way and Americans were kept off the highways to save gasoline. But easy access to and from Rutland had been a fact of life since the middle 1800s when the Rutland Railroad — known later as the Rutland Railway — was founded. The heyday of the line came at the beginning of this century. Both freight and passenger traffic was heavy, and the railroad's fleet of ships carried cargo from the Rutland's western terminus in Ogdensburg, N.Y., across the Great Lakes to Chicago.

The prosperity was not destined to last long. The Rutland suffered from the same maladies that came to afflict nearly all railroads. With the advent of cheap automobiles and better highways, people turned their backs on trains. Freight business also moved off the rails and onto the roads. World War II provided a brief respite from the steady decline, but the railroads' days were numbered. The Rutland came to an end in the early 1960s, and the huge shops and switching yard, and the venerable station in the city's downtown area, eventually became a shopping center and parking lot.

For most people younger than 40, it's hard to realize the railroad's importance and its pervasive presence in the Rutland area. It employed hundreds and made Rutland a major transportation center. Also hard to realize is the glory that was once the Rutland's — when its insignia graced china soup bowls in its dining cars, and when its president rode in a custom-built Pullman car and locomotive. Those were the days when if you wanted to become a Vermont governor, you became a railroad president first.

A glimpse back into that era is being offered by the Rutland Historical Society at an exhibit running through October. "The Rutland Railroad, The Way It Was." Although small, the collection of photos, maps, magazines, a conductor's suit, old tickets, china, headlamps and other artifacts helps younger people gain an insight into the old days of railroading and allows their parents to remember when they used to ride the train to Lake Champlain beaches for a summer outing.

Old photographs form a large part of the exhibit. Many have been published in Jim Shaughnessy's book *The Rutland Road*, but some have never been exhibited before. There are shots of various stations along the railroad, the big train yard in Rutland, damage done to the railroad during the flood of 1927 and different locomotives used on the line.

Maps show the main lines of the Rutland, and various connecting branches. A scale model of a Rutland Railroad train, complete with cars with the Rutland insignia, sits in a case. Next to it are old timetables and tickets, and a bowl from one of the railroad's dining cars.

In another case are copies of the railroad's own in-house magazine, published in the post-World War II years. An article from another publication talks about the sale of surplus railroad equipment — old bells, regulator clocks (not guaranteed to run) and lanterns. At the end of the exhibit is a blow-up of a Rutland Herald story about the crippling strike that hit the railroad in the early '60s. The railroad's demise has often been laid at the doorstep of labor, but the fact of the matter is that railroads in general just could not keep up with the changing times.

The Rutland Historical Society is located on Center Street, across from the city fire station. It is open Tuesday, Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is free.

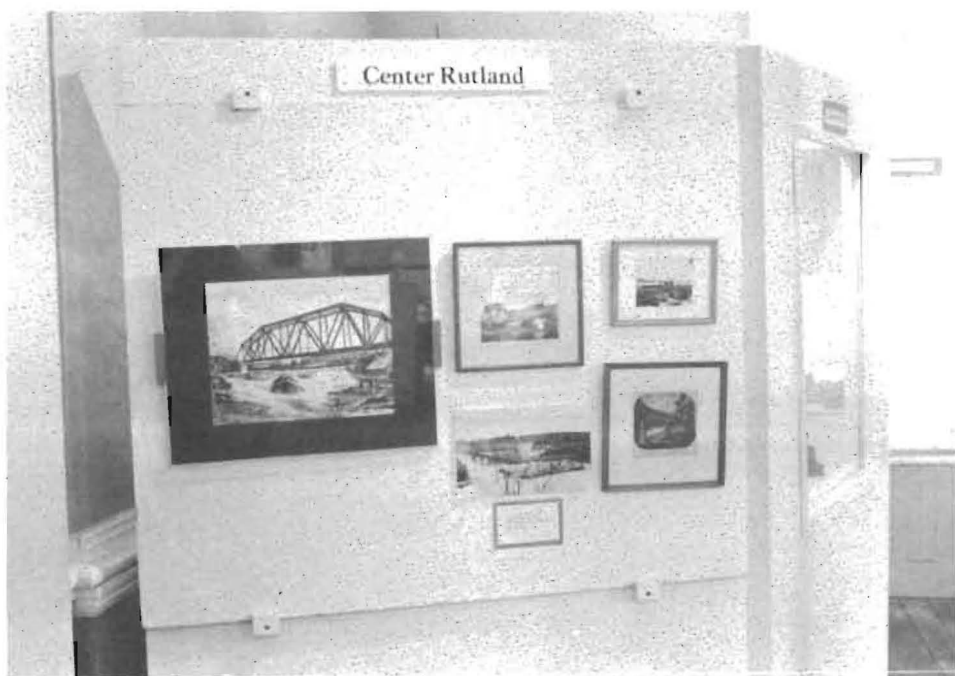
Any hopes that the exhibit would coincide with the publication of a revised edition of Shaughnessy's book have been dashed, by the way. The book was originally to have come out in the early summer, but so far it hasn't appeared.

Allen Gilbert is an assistant editor of this newspaper.











From Beginning to End

Why was the Rutland Railroad built and why, 110 years later, did it cease to exist?

Lack of good transportation to markets in the more settled parts of the East for the timber and marble, with which Vermont was so richly endowed, was the reason that the Rutland Railroad was organized.

After the great influx of settlers to the region after the War of 1812 the potential for trade with Boston was frustrated by the barrier of the Green Mountains.

At one point consideration was even being given to building a canal, but at about the same time a new possibility was intriguing financiers, that of moving people and goods over roads of iron — railroads.

So began the land speculation, bitter rivalries, formation and abandonment of

railroad companies, financing and construction problems, upkeep and natural disaster problems, not to mention recurring episodes of poor management, in an almost unending stream through the 19th century.

Railroading in northern New England was seldom a financial success. The end was precipitated by the Rutland Railway unions' demands for more money and benefits at the same time that business revenues were declining. Automobiles dealt the blow to passenger service and the expansion of fine highways after World War II enabled the trucking industry to take over all but the very heavy industrial tonnage. Railroads in general had become inefficient because, being federally regulated, there was little incentive for competition.

(See Jim Shaughnessy's "The Rutland Road")

"Right this way. All aboard."

Welcome to the Museum

How About A Trip To The Farm Museum?

By YVONNE DALEY

RUTLAND — If you want to learn a lot about the history of farming, unique inventions and ways that man has used machinery to help him through the years, the place to go is the Farm Museum at the Vermont State Fair.

And, if you're lucky, maybe you can get Archibald Todd, superintendent of the Farm Museum, or one of the other Farm Museum historians, to give you a grand tour.

Todd, from Mendon, is a wealth of information and is filled with anecdotes garnered from 75 years of observation.

"People had to be clever in the old days. They say we've progressed a lot . . . I doubt it very much," he said as he explained the used of various farming, household and travel machinery exhibited in two buildings on the fairgrounds.

Most of the items came as gifts from Vermonsters, such as the grindstones and knives and other tools that were donated by Julia Blake and Helen Miner, now deceased. Their father was one of two wagon builders in Rutland prior to 1850. He had a shop on Pine Street, and many of his tools were "just lying around," Todd said, "'til two or three years ago when we got them."

Here, you can see pleasure sleighs and work sleds. The first, fancy contraptions with nicely upholstered seats are more impressive than the ones at the Shelburne Museum, Todd said, especially one pre-1900 sleigh.

There are hand-powered horse clippers, buckboards, wheelwright's tools, two-wheeled sulkies that came from Sudbury and an incredible array of cultivating tools and horse-, sheep-, and even goat-powered machines.

The real "gem" of the collection, Todd said, is a threshing machine that came from the home of Hugh Bromley of Middletown Springs.

The museum has a rare Eureka mower, flail and mowing machines and a large collection of craftsman's tools, all donated by Rutland resident Jane Anderson.

Fascinating are the early washing machines, laundry agitator and two-tub clothes washer, the hand wringer and the Saturday-night bath tub — all solid reminders of how much easier housework has become.

Cider presses, ice block saws, cattle scales and stump pullers attest to the ingenuity of the old-time farmer.

At the Farm Museum you can see how these farmers, self-sufficient folk, improvised and invented ways of doing difficult tasks.

The haws of clearing land, sawing ice in winter for summer, cutting hay, root and corn crops for animals, preserving food and cultivating fields are all here to see at the Farm Museum.

"We're quite proud of this collection," Todd said.

"How valuable is it? I don't know. We got it all for nothing, but I'd hate to have to replace it. I think it would be impossible to replace all this."

"This equipment tells you a lot about what we were like," Todd remarked, pointing to the side-hill plows, the wood-frame plows and horse-drawn cultivators.

"We were clever, ingenious people, used our heads and backs together, not against each other. All these subsidies now, man doesn't have to be too clever to get out of working. I think we're going backward."

Wood water pipes found in Shrewsbury in 1979, but dating back more than a century, suggest that the cleverness of which Todd spoke was a way of life in a simpler yet in some ways more complicated time.

"Each year this attraction gets more popular," Todd said. Outside the museum, steam-powered engines were running, and Dick Pratt from Clarendon and Paul Whittemore of Rutland were making constant adjustments to keep the machines running smoothly.

History is on display, and you have the chance for the next week to look into your past at the Vermont State Fair's Farm Museum.



RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
101 CENTER STREET, RUTLAND, VERMONT
(802) 775-2006

The society publishes the *Quarterly* for its members with the aim of preserving and studying the history of the Rutland community, which is comprised of the Towns of Rutland, Proctor and West Rutland and the City of Rutland. The Society maintains and operates a museum at 101 Center Street, Rutland, in the former Bank of Rutland building (built in 1825), now owned by the City of Rutland and leased to the Society at no charge.

Membership

Membership in the Society is open to all upon payment of dues to the:

Membership Secretary—**Hope E. Hubbard**, 248 Lincoln Avenue, Rutland, VT 05701

Dues are \$3.00 per year for regular members; for those wishing to give the Society further support, a contributing membership is \$10.00; a business membership is \$25.00; a sustaining membership is \$100.00; and a life membership (one payment only) is \$75.00.

All members receive as part of their membership four issues of the *Quarterly*. The expiration date of each membership is listed on the mailing label of the publication. Members wishing to pay two or more years' dues in advance are encouraged to do so to reduce costs.

Manuscripts are invited; address correspondence to the Editor.

Gifts or bequests of money or articles of local historical interest are welcome at all times and are deductible for income tax purposes.

Editor: **Michael L. Austin**
Managing Editor: **Jean C. Ross**

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101 Center Street
Rutland, Vermont 05701

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